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SUBJECT: CODEL FEINGOLD MEETS WITH PRIME MINISTER GILANI

Classified by Ambassador Anne Patterson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a May 26 meeting with CODEL Feingold, Prime Minister Yousuf Gilani expressed gratitude for U.S. support for democracy and reiterated Pakistan's commitment to combat terrorism. Gilani believes that there is an opportunity for a multi-dimensional U.S.-Pakistan relationship and sought additional economic, intelligence, refugee and defense cooperation. On recent peace negotiations, Gilani clarified that the Government will not negotiate with militants but will engage non-militant tribesman ready to enter the mainstream political process. The Prime Minister reported that he will travel to Kabul and address the Afghan National Assembly at President Karzai's invitation. Gilani thinks that Pakistan's judiciary will eventually have to be restored and expressed confidence that Nawaz Sharif's PML-N will stand by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) led government. While he has nothing personal against President Musharraf, Prime Minister Gilani believes that the people of Pakistan have given the PPP a historic mandate to restore parliamentary sovereignty. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Gilani began a May 26 meeting with Senator Russ Feingold and the Ambassador by thanking the U.S. for supporting democracy in Pakistan. Senator Feingold remarked there is currently a historic opportunity to forge a multi-faceted relationship with Pakistan and asked how the U.S. can assist in Pakistan's democratic transition. The Prime Minister agreed that an opportunity currently exists, suggesting that more person-to-person contacts between U.S. and Pakistani government officials and institutions would be beneficial. Pakistan also needs assistance in stabilizing the economy, pointing out that rising fuel and food prices are particularly damaging. Gilani went on to request deeper intelligence and defense cooperation as well as assistance for the more than three million Afghan refugees currently in Pakistan. Adding that the U.S. "wanted democracy, now here it is," the Prime Minister sought additional U.S. aid as part of "democracy dividend" and advocated the passage of trade preference programs like Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs).

¶3. (C) On the Government of Pakistan's (GOP) support for the War on Terror, Gilani remains "totally committed" to fighting terrorism, pointing out that the PPP continues to be a prime target for attacks. The Prime Minister reiterated that it is in Pakistan's interest to combat extremism, adding that violence is destroying the country and economy. The recent election victory of the Awami National Party (ANP) in the NWFP proves that moderate forces have prevailed in Pakistan. The Government will engage non-militant tribesman ready to enter the mainstream political process. "We are anti-Mullah Omar and pro-Hamid Karzai," he continued, clarifying that the GOP will not negotiate with militants. Negotiations remain conditional on an end to cross border attacks and the departure of foreign fighters from Pakistan.

¶4. (C) Turning his attention to Afghanistan, the Prime Minister affirmed that a stable Afghanistan is in Pakistan's national interest. However, Gilani expressed frustration with Afghanistan, noting that Pakistani actions against militants have not been matched on the Afghan side. Pakistan has over 1,000 border posts compared to 90-100 on the Afghan side. Pakistan has tried to employ biometric screening procedures at some border crossings and is willing to consider erecting a border fence with Afghan concurrence. Referring to Karzai's government as a "friend" of the PPP in Balochistan and ANP in the NWFP, Gilani reported that he will travel to Kabul and address the Afghan National Assembly at President Karzai's invitation.

¶5. (C) When asked about the current state of domestic politics, Gilani explained that Pakistan was currently "in limbo" between a presidential system of government and a parliamentary system. The PPP-led Government looks to balance power in the country; the National Assembly should be the basis of political power in Pakistan as it represents the people. While he has nothing personal against President Musharraf, Prime Minister Gilani believes that the people of Pakistan have given the PPP a historic mandate to restore parliamentary sovereignty. Gilani described the opposition PML-Q as "a bunch of opportunists" that does not sincerely support President Musharraf. He believes that while most PML-Q parliamentarians are scared to defect, many will eventually join the PPP.

¶6. (C) Senator Feingold then asked about the PML-N's current role in the coalition and the Prime Minister's plans for the restoration of the judiciary. Gilani believes that Nawaz Sharif's PML-N will support the PPP fully, adding that the party did not strongly object to his refusal to accept PML-N minister resignations. When prompted,

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the Prime Minister admitted that he believes the PML-N will eventually rejoin the Cabinet. Gilani reported that the PPP is currently working out the modalities of the restoration of the judiciary, pointing out that an "understanding" has to be reached first. Sooner or later, he concluded, the judges will have to be restored.

¶7. (C) The PPP continues to support the establishment of a UN tribunal to investigate the December 2007 assassination of former Prime Minister and PPP Chairman Benazir Bhutto. Gilani reported that the GOP is already in negotiations with the Office of the UN Secretary General. Referring to the investigation as a party commitment, Gilani explained that he wants a neutral and authentic investigation into the assassination, looking to avoid "political finger pointing."

¶8. (U) CODEL Feingold did not clear this cable.

PATTERSON